

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1 1. (Previously presented) A stringed instrument comprising:
2 a solid body having exposed front and rear surfaces;
3 a tuning mechanism;
4 a neck having one end joined to said body and an opposite end retaining said
5 tuning mechanism;
6 a retainer block distinct from and encompassed by said rear surface; and
7 a plurality of strings each having a first end secured to said tuning mechanism;
8 and a second end retained by said retainer block.

1 2. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 1 including a bridge
2 mounted on said front surface and wherein said strings extend from said tuning mechanism, over
3 said bridge, and through said body to said block.

1 3. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 2 wherein said
2 retainer block has an inner surface and an outer surface and defines a plurality of channels
3 extending between said inner and outer surfaces, and each of said strings passes through a
4 different one of said channels.

1 4. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 3 wherein said
2 second ends are enlarged to prevent passage through said channels.

1 5. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 4 wherein each of
2 said channels comprises a counterbore in said outer surface retaining one of said enlarged second
3 ends.

1 6. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 1 wherein said block
2 is unitary and made of brass.

1 7. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 6 including a bridge
2 mounted on said front surface and wherein said strings extend from said tuning mechanism, over
3 said bridge, and through said body to said block.

1 8. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 7 wherein said
2 retainer block has an inner surface and an outer surface and defines a plurality of channels
3 extending between said inner and outer surfaces, each of said strings passes through a different
4 one of said channels.

1 9. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 8 wherein said
2 second ends are enlarged to prevent passage through said channels.

1 10. (Original) A string instrument according to claim 9 wherein each of said
2 channels comprises a counterbore in said outer surface retaining one of said enlarged second
3 ends.

1 11. (Original) A string instrument according to claim 3 wherein said body
2 defines a cavity retaining said block and intersecting said rear surface.

1 12. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 11 wherein said
2 second ends are enlarged to prevent passage through said channels.

1 13. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 12 wherein each of
2 said channels comprises a counterbore in said outer surface retaining one of said enlarged second
3 ends.

1 14. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 11 wherein said
2 block is unitary and made of brass.

1 15. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 14 wherein said
2 second ends are enlarged to prevent passage through said channels.

1 16. (Original) A stringed instrument according to claim 15 wherein each of
2 said channels comprises a counterbore in said outer surface retaining one of said enlarged second
3 ends.

1 17. (New) A stringed instrument according to claim 1 wherein the solid
2 body defines a slot from the front surface through the body, and wherein the plurality of strings
3 extend through the slot